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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR SPEAKS ON CURRENT STATUS AND FUTURE OF
U.S.-TAJIKISTAN RELATIONS

1. At the invitation of the Central Executive Committee of the People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan (PDPT, ruling party), on November 30 in Dushanbe the ambassador spoke to an overflow crowd of college students, members of parliament, NGO representatives, PDPT activists, and journalists on "The Current Status and Future of U.S.-Tajikistan Relations. Text of the speech follows in para two.

2. BEGIN TEXT:

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with members of parliament, officials from the President's Administration, the Youth Committee of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan activists, NGO representatives, and journalists. I am very pleased that you asked me to discuss U.S.-Tajik relations.

This is especially timely because the U.S. Government has recently completed a comprehensive review of its relations with all the countries of Central Asia. In broadest terms, we reaffirmed that U.S. interests are 1) political and economic reform, 2) security (including against terrorism, extremism, and narcotics), and 3) energy and commercial. The purpose of all three equally together is to promote long-term stability, good neighborly regional cooperation, and prosperity.

ENERGY AND COMMERCE

Let's look at each of these three for Tajikistan, starting with energy and commerce. In recent years, President Emomali Rahmonov has advocated a convincing plan to develop hydroelectric power and to improve land transportation routes for the region. We have listened to his views, and we agree with him.

During her October visit to Central Asia, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced the Infrastructure Integration Initiative for Greater Central Asia, including Afghanistan. I think few in the region paid much attention to this, but it is a very significant development. We want to see an improved system of roads and highways that will allow goods to transit the region efficiently and reach international markets via warm-water ports in the south. To that end, we are helping to rebuild the highways in Afghanistan, and we are using our influence in International Financial Institutions to support road projects in Central Asia, and specifically in Tajikistan.

A most recent example is U.S. support for the Asian Development Bank loan to rebuild the road from Dushanbe to Kyrgyzstan through the Rasht Valley. If the farmers in Rasht can once again get their magnificent fruit and other agricultural products to markets far beyond their villages, prosperity will return to that region.

And of course by now you are familiar with the U.S. gift of about \$30 million and the technical expertise to build an international bridge between Tajikistan and Afghanistan, as well as the customs and border-control points at both ends of the bridge. When we say we will do something, we do it.

We also see the value of developing Tajikistan's considerable hydroelectric potential for use in Tajikistan and to sell more broadly in the region. This will take more than finishing several major dams and hydroelectric stations. Electricity transmission lines and complex international marketing systems need to be established. Both your Ambassador Homrahon Zaripov in Washington and I have strongly promoted this project in Washington.

I am very pleased that a major U.S. corporation with worldwide business interests is negotiating closely with Russia's RAO UES to help President Rahmonov's vision become reality. Further, U.S. Government commercial and financial departments are increasingly involved and want to see this project reach fruition. We understand that achieving this goal will enhance stability and promote long-term prosperity for the entire region. Some do not want U.S. participation in this project, but it would be a good guarantee for Tajikistan's economic sovereignty in the global economy.

SECURITY

The U.S.-Tajikistan security relationship is consistently growing. In recent months, Tajikistan has joined the nearly 90 nations around the world that support the Proliferation Security Initiative to prevent the illegal trans-shipment of weapons of mass destruction, their components, and missile technologies. Also, Tajikistan is starting the process that will lead to a Weapons of Mass Destruction Agreement between our two countries and will open the door for significant new security-assistance programs. These are just the latest developments.

We take seriously our partnership to enhance border security and counter-narcotics programs in Tajikistan. In the U.S. fiscal year 2005, we have allocated about \$33 million dollars for these essential activities - a truly significant increase above previous years' funding.

Some like to complain and blame Tajikistan for the narcotics transiting its territory. We, the United States, are doing something about it. It is no secret that it is largely U.S. funding that is responsible for Tajikistan's Drug Control Agency having gained international praise for its professionalism and effectiveness. And, of course, it is thanks to the serious Tajik patriots, the men and women who work honestly every day to make the Drug Control Agency a success. Our support continues, and soon the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency will open an office in Dushanbe to further enhance anti-narcotics cooperation between our two countries, with Afghanistan, and internationally. We want to work closely with Russia on this issue.

In response to Tajikistan's request, we are working closely with the State Committee for Border Protection and providing both material assistance and training, in cooperation with the European Commission, to increase Tajikistan's ability to protect its own borders. This is necessary not only for regional security, but also to promote Tajikistan's sovereignty.

Finally, without going into detail, we have new counter-terrorism programs with Tajikistan that, in the longer term, will increase security and stability in the region.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REFORM

Let's start with economic reform.

As I have done before, I will again praise the Government of Tajikistan for the credible steps it has taken toward economic and financial reform. These include banking reform, tax reform, simplified regulations to make it easier to register a new business, and positive steps to prepare to join the World Trade Organization.

But good laws and regulations aren't very useful if they are not implemented fairly and honestly. More than anything else, corruption and protection of special interests - which are often

one and the same thing - will impede economic development.

Do you know what especially annoys small business owners in Tajikistan? The constant, irrational parade of tax inspectors, health inspectors, fire inspectors, and, who knows, probably even inspectors of inspectors - all who have their hands out and their pockets open. This is more than annoying; it's destructive.

A general manager of a successful medium-sized business in Dushanbe recently told me his company lost nearly 40 days last year to dealing with so-called inspectors. This is 40 days of lost productivity. This is 40 days of lost profit and lost legitimate tax base for the central government's budget.

Now for political reform. Let me see if I can find a new way to explain our views so that I don't sound like a "revolutionary Bolshevik" seeking to overthrow an old system and impose a new ideology - because we honestly seek democratic evolution, not "color revolution." We want the current government to succeed according to modern international standards.

Let me say plainly and clearly that we are not seeking to drag countries away from one sphere of influence into another one. That's a very old-guard way of thinking. It is a discredited ideology. In the 19th century, the world saw the Great Game between the British and Russian Empires in Greater Central Asia.

In the 20th century, the world saw the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the West. This is now the 21st century, and times have changed. To divide modern international relations into different "spheres of influence" is to live in a supposed "paradise lost" and is historically doomed to failure.

In the contemporary world, countries should decide first and foremost what is in their own national interests. What will make them truly stable and prosperous? What will give their populations hope for the future? And I have to say it's not holding Big Brother's hand every time you want to cross the

street.

I fully understand Tajikistan seeks stability above all else because of the traumatic memories of the civil war. But please consider this stark fact - 50 percent of the population of Tajikistan is under 16 years of age. What will happen in five years, in ten years, when those children come of age without personal memories of the civil war? Isn't it better to prepare a future for them that will guarantee them an economic and political place in society so that they don't have to rebel to demand it? Isn't that the essence of true, long-term stability?

We firmly believe that you prepare the next generation by giving them the opportunities to become responsible citizens and to think for themselves. Not everyone who has an opinion different from the official opinion is "an enemy." Young leaders need to build their experience and gain confidence. They need access to a broad range of ideas. They need independent media - including independent television and radio stations - where they can debate each other and test their ideas. I assure you, this will not endanger the stability of the state. On the contrary, it will strengthen it. These young people need to enter politics to bring fresh blood and new ideas into the system, rather than be "permitted" to enter politics only after they have proved their loyalty to the existing system.

Tajikistan is strong enough that it can afford new voices with new ideas. Tajikistan is strong enough that it can open its mass media to "the marketplace of new ideas" and new opinions.

We recommend that Tajikistan trust the natural intelligence and patriotism of the Tajik people. If this happens, Tajikistan will blossom as an island of stability and prosperity and stand as a bright beacon of hope for other less free peoples in the world.

I wish you luck. I wish you strength. I wish you success.

Thank you so much for listening to me. I now would like to hear your views and answer your questions.

END TEXT.
HOAGLAND

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